

Plymouth Place
(Cory Hotel)
1560-72 Broadway
Denver
Denver County
Colorado

HABS No. CO-24

HABS
COLO
16-DENV
1-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. CO-24

PLYMOUTH PLACE
(CORY HOTEL)HABS
COLO
16-DENV
1-

Location: 1560-72 Broadway, at the corner of 16th Avenue,
Denver, Denver County, Colorado.

USGS Englewood Quadrangle, Universal Transverse
Mercator Coordinates: 13.501150.4398860.

Present Owners: Regional Transportation District (1979).

Present Use: The second and third floors are in use as a hotel
with the hotel lobby on the first floor. The first
floor contains a barber shop, car rental, restaurant,
beauty salon, stationery store and one vacant shop.

Significance: This is a large three story corner commercial
building, designed with Colonial Revival Style
details in 1898 by prominent Denver architects Marean
and Norton. The construction of the building at the
three way intersection of Broadway, Sixteenth Street
and Sixteenth Avenue caused considerable controversy
as it blocked the vista up Sixteenth Street, the
major business street, to the State Capitol
Building. An early city plan had proposed cutting
Sixteenth Street through this site to the Capitol.
The demolition of this building and the
implementation of that plan is still an issue in
Denver.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Date of erection: 1898.
2. Architects: The building was designed by the architectural
firm of Marean and Norton. Willis Marean and Albert Norton
formed their partnership in 1895 after being associated with
the firm of F.E. Edbrooke. In the time that Marean was with
Edbrooke he had major responsibility for the Brown Palace
Hotel (1892), Central Presbyterian Church (1892) and the

Masonic Temple (1889). The firm of Marean and Norton designed many major buildings including the YMCA building, the open-air theater (1919) at the civic center and the Cheesman Memorial (1907). Marean was a member of the Denver Art commission and of Mayor Robert Speer's advisory committee, "and creating of the civic center, landscaping the public parks and building new boulevards in the Speer regime followed closely his suggestions." (Obituary, Denver Post, February 1, 1939).

3. Original and subsequent owners: Lots 1-5, Block 5, Cheesman and Kassler's Addition.

This property, along with some additional adjacent property, remained in the hands of the Kassler family of Denver from 1868, when George W. Kassler purchased the land from Henry C. Brown, until 1976 when it was sold to the Regional Transportation District of Denver.

George Kassler died July 20, 1890 and the ownership was transferred to his wife, Maria T. Kassler. In 1898, a son, Edwin S. Kassler, acting on behalf of his mother, had Plymouth Place built on the site. On May 27, 1913, the sons of Maria and George Kassler, Edwin S. and Charles M. Kassler, purchased, for \$1.00, a two-thirds interest in the property. A warranty deed was filed in the office of the Recorder of the City of Denver. Another warranty deed was filed July 8, 1929 when Maria T., Edwin S. and Charles M. Kassler transferred all of their properties on this block to the Kassler Investment Company for \$100.00. On September 23, 1976, the Kassler Investment Company sold the land to the Regional Transportation District.

4. Original plan and construction of building: Plymouth Place (later renamed the Plymouth Hotel, and still later, the Cory Hotel), extended 125' along Broadway and 125' along Sixteenth Avenue and was three stories. It was built to accomodate stores, office or dwelling rooms, and a ballroom. The first floor contained nine shops: three along 16th Avenue and six along Broadway. A photo taken sometime shortly after 1906 shows a drug store at the corner and along Broadway a sight-seeing agency, the hotel entry and a western auto supply store. The second floor was designed "to be divided up into rooms arranged so they can be occupied either as offices or dwelling rooms, except the ballroom, 53' x 66' in size, running through two stories, the second and third."

The third floor had rooms for offices or living rooms. Entrance to the building proper was on Sixteenth Avenue with an entrance on Broadway leading to the ballroom (Denver Republican, April 13, 1898).

The most significant feature of the building was the ballroom. Plans called for the ballroom to be "the most complete and perfectly appointed ballroom in the city, fitted up with parlors and dressing rooms, and in connection...a banquet room and a kitchen on the first floor...This ballroom [was to be] decorated in Moorish style, the electric lights being placed in the ceiling along the decorations. [It was to have] a gallery extending all around the room with Moorish arches extending towards the ball room. The wood work [was to be] finished in white enamel and special attention...given to the floor (Denver Republican, April 13, 1898)."

It is not clear if the room was decorated precisely as intended, but the ballroom was put to use almost immediately for society affairs. The ballroom was intended for the exclusive use of the Capitol Hill 400, the most prestigious social group in Denver. Society columns were filled with the activities of Kassler Hall, the Plymouth Place ballroom. The Times, December 16, 1898, reported: "The Whitehead Fete poudre of last evening was the quaintest, prettiest and most artistic private ball ever given in the city...The interior of Kassler Hall was admirably suited to the affair, with its delicate coloring and renaissance ornamentation shown effectively under myriads of lights...Dancing...continued till 11:30, when a supper was served on the balcony."

5. Additions and alterations: The building was clearly a speculative venture with its shops and rental rooms. This must not have been a successful development because by 1906 the building was advertised as a hotel catering to "the best class of patronage (Illustrated Industrial Souvenir, 1906)." The ballroom either did not receive enough bookings or the income from a hotel deemed more important because the ballroom was removed at this time. In the 1906 remodeling, the hotel lobby was put in near the center of the Broadway facade where shops had originally been located. Access to the second and third floors was (and still is) through this lobby. Originally there were two street-facing entrances to the second and third floors. One, located on Sixteenth Avenue gave entry to the rental rooms. The location of this former entry is defined by the decorative lintels of the windows

directly above which are similar to those of the corner windows. The other entry faced Broadway and led to the ballroom.

In 1935, \$3500.00 was spent remodeling and installing bathrooms. The original hotel plan had short hallways, opening off the main corridor, which served each two rooms. These hallways were filled in with bathrooms, and entrances were installed along the main corridor. The stores and hotel lobby fronts were faced in this remodeling with imitation black marble and white imitation marble accent.

Two other remodelings are of interest. In 1959, the lobby of the hotel was extensively remodeled. In 1970, The Realty Rascals Inc. leased the corner space and spent \$600,000.00 installing Leo's Place restaurant and elaborately decorating it with architectural antiques. This is one of the most popular restaurants amongst the Denver business community.

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

1. City plan of Denver: The property that Plymouth Place was built upon was the only interruption of a vista up Sixteenth Street of the State Capitol Building. Prior to 1898, plans to cut Sixteenth Street through this property had been discussed. In late January 1898, stimulated by the possibility that E.S. Kassler was considering development of this property, newspapers urged action on the extension of the street. Despite a flurry of newspaper articles and editorials, meeting of interested parties and organizations, and the reported reception of Mr. Kassler and Mr. Cheesman (the owner of the other affected parcels), nothing came of the issue. On the 13 of April, Mr. Kassler announced plans for Plymouth Place.

The issue was raised again in June and July of 1906 when Walter S. Cheesman and Maria T. Kassler presented petitions to the Board of Public Works and the Board of Supervisors asking that the alley of their block be vacated by the city. In return for this, Mr. Cheesman proposed to give the city a fifty foot strip running east-west through the block. The exchange would allow him, he noted, to open a large skating rink on his property. Newspaper articles and editorials argued that if Mr. Cheesman improved his property, it would put an end to the opening of Sixteenth Street forever. By this time the Plymouth Hotel Building had been in place eight years and the opening of the Street would have cut the building in half. Articles made no reference to the Plymouth.

A writer in 1906 vehemently proclaimed, "It would be disloyalty to the beauty of Denver to let any such abominable makeshift go through as this proposed fifty-foot lane from Broadway to Lincoln Avenue in place of the grand diagonal way to the Capitol. Sixteenth Street must go straightway, at its present angle, full width, to the Capitol, placing the great state building forever at the head of one of Denver's finest streets."

It is not clear when Mr. Cheesman finally developed his property, but the alley at some point was vacated and an old postcard, date unknown, shows an east-west unpaved strip cut through the property. The property today is fully developed including the east-west strip.

Now, eighty-one years later, the Regional Transportation District proposes to implement the early city plan by demolishing the Cory Hotel (Plymouth Place) and other buildings on the block and by replacing them with new transit development that respects the vista.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Old views: Three views of the building may be found in the Western History Division of the Denver Public Library. All three views are taken looking toward the northwest corner of the building from Sixteenth Street. The Regional Transportation District has three more views, one a postcard, shot from the capitol toward the back of the building. There is a drawing of the building as it was proposed in the April 13, 1898 Daily News.

2. Architectural Drawings: Undated photostat copies of second and third floor drawings (plans) showing rearrangement of rooms and addition of bathrooms. Existing plan indicates no ballroom. Gives no architect's name. Probably from 1935 renovation as described in building permits.

1969 drawings for Leo's Place restaurant, by Fred Y. Mikawa, architect.

3. Bibliography

- a. Primary and Unpublished Sources:

Denver. Board of Directors of Kassler properties.
Letter from John McCaffery, manager of the Cory Hotel
to the Board of Directors of Kassler properties.
September 11, 1959.

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Denver. Board of Public Work. Petition to Board of Public Works from Maria Kassler and Walter Cheesman. June 2, 1906.

Denver. Board of Public Works. Petition to Board of Public Works from Maria Kassler and Walter Cheesman. June 7, 1906.

Denver. Board of Public Works. Letter from Walter Cheesman to Mr. George E. Randolph, President, Board of Public Works. June 8, 1906.

Denver. Clerk and Records Office. Book 2279, page 429; Book 4308, page 628.

Denver. Cory Hotel. Hotel ledger and account book from August, 1935, to December, 1936.

Denver. Cory Hotel. Notebook of samples (stationery, invoices).

Denver. Cory Hotel. Scrapbook of newspaper ads of 1935-36 and map.

Denver, Denver Public Library, Western History Division. Building permits from the city of Denver.

Denver. Denver Tax Assessors Office. Master Property Books and Property File.

Sanborn Insurance Maps, 1890, updated through 1904, volume 2, plate 52.

b. Secondary and Published:

"Ballroom for the Exclusive Use of the 400," Denver Evening Post, August 9, 1898, page 6.

"Buildings May Be In The Way," Denver Republican, February 1, 1898, page 5.

"Cheesman Asks City for Gift," Denver Post, (Undated clipping, probably June 1906).

"Cheesman is now Hunting For a Trade," Denver Post, July 26, 1906, pages 1, 7.

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"City Has Not Yet Given Cheesman \$50,000 Strip of Land He Wants," Denver Post, July 25, 1906, page 6.

"Dance of the Pioneers: Ball at Kassler's Hall Last Night a Brilliant Success." The Times, November 23, 1900, page 8, column 1.

"Extension of Sixteenth Street Would Be of Great Benefit," (letter to editor), Denver Republican, February 2, 1898, page 2.

"Gave Favors From Abroad: Unique Souvenirs Distributed at the Gano-Fritch Ball," The Times, December 19, 1900, page 4, column 4.

"Improving Upper Broadway," The Daily News, April 13, 1898, page 7.

"Indications of a Conspiracy," Denver Post, (Undated clipping, probably June-August 1906).

"New Kassler Block Planned," Denver Republican, April 13, 1898, page 5.

Obituary, "Albert J. Norton," Rocky Mountain News, February 13, 1944, page 34.

Obituary, "Marean, Willis," Rocky Mountain News, February 11, 1939, page 6.

"Opening Sixteenth Street," Denver Republican, January 31, 1898, page 4.

"Plans of Proposed Kassler Block at Sixteenth and Broadway Include a Very Handsome Ball Room and Call For An Outlay of \$40,000," The Daily News, April 13, 1898, page 7.

"Real Estate Men Will Act," Denver Republican, February 2, 1898, page 2.

"Sixteenth Street," Denver Republican, February 3, 1898, page 4.

"Society," The Times, February 11, 1902, page 5, column 3.

"The Cold Storage Wads vs. the Red-Hot Push," Denver Post, July 28, 1906, page 4.

"The Week in Society," The Times, December 16, 1898, page 10, column 1.

"The Week in Society," The Times, December 23, 1898, page 10, column 1.

"We're Going Some," Denver Post, July 26, 1906, page 4.

"Willis Marean, Pioneer Denver Architect, Dies," Denver Post, February 10, 1939, page 1.

Prepared by Long-Hoeft Architects
1979

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The building is a well designed example of a late nineteenth century commercial building. It was designed in what was defined in 1898 as the Colonial Style, with red pressed brick and stone and pressed metal ornamentation. It was noted for its ballroom which no longer exists.
2. Condition of fabric: Good.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: The building extends for 125' along Broadway and 125' along Sixteenth Avenue. In addition, another wing making up the third leg of a U extends back from Broadway 115 feet. Various minor additions have been made over time in the center of the U.
2. Foundations: Brick walls and piers.
3. Wall construction, finish and color: The exterior walls are masonry, originally of two colors, the lighter color creating a pattern around the windows. The brick has since been painted a dark gray which has obliterated the pattern. The first floor stores and hotel lobby were faced in 1935 using imitation black marble and white imitation marble accent.

4. Structural system, framing: The exterior is load bearing masonry. The interior is wood frame with some iron columns exposed on the first floor. An article in the Denver Evening Post, August 9, 1898, written while the building was under construction states that the building framework is of iron. This framework is not presently visible. The roof over the south wing, covering the original ballroom, is a composite wood and iron truss system.
5. Openings:
 - a. Doors and doorways: The present entrance to the hotel is in the center of the Broadway facade. Each of the shops has a street-side entrance and a rear exit. The hotel has fire escape exits from the second and third floors. All store entries and the hotel lobby entrance are hollow metal and glass.
 - b. Windows:

First floor: The shop fronts have large display windows parallel to the street and angling in to the shop doors. The lobby of the hotel has three large fixed glass panels. The restaurant on the corner has had its original large glass panels removed and stained glass and tinted glass installed in smaller areas.

Second and third floors: The second and third floor windows are one over one pane double-hung sash. There are above the paired end windows of each floor on both street facades. There are decorative lintels as well over the windows above the location of the original Sixteenth Avenue hotel entrance. See HABS measured drawings 7 of 11 and 8 of 11 of Plymouth Place (Cory Hotel). On the second floor the lintels take the shape of open-bed pediments. All second floor windows are edged in brick laid in a pattern simulating quoins and keystones. The end windows have an additional molding around the quoining. On the third floor the lintels are segmental arches supported on brackets. All other third floor street facade windows are topped by decorative plaster filled arches with bricks simulating impost blocks and keystones. All upper windows not facing the street are double hung windows set under relieving arches.
6. Roof: Shape, covering: A parapet with a projecting pressed metal cornice along the street facades extends above the

built up roof behind. Over the south wing of the building, above the original ballroom, is a hipped roof covered with rolled roofing.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

- a. Basement: The two southernmost stores and the restaurant have their own basements. The hotel has its basement directly under the lobby. A boiler room for the building is reached by a stair opening onto the alley.
- b. First floor: The shops are simple rectangular-plan shapes. Some have added one or two interior partitions. The restaurant was elaborately decorated in 1970 with wood panelling and antique fixtures. A mezzanine level covers about half of the dining area. The lobby of the hotel was remodeled in 1959 and includes an L-shaped lounge around a check-in desk and switchboard. A stair and elevator are to the side of the desk, opposite the lounge and directly in front of the entry door. There is a storage room located behind the desk area.
- c. Second floor: All three wings have rooms opening off a double loaded corridor. There are thirty-seven guest rooms on this floor and thirty-one private bathrooms. The floor also has a manager's office (at the top of the stairs), a maid's room, a public bath and four small closets opening onto the corridor. The second floor had, until 1905, a ballroom in the south wing of the structure. It was 53' x 66' in size and had parlors and dressing rooms adjacent. The ballroom extended up through the third floor and was surrounded by a balcony.
- d. Third floor: The third floor is similar to the second, but has two more rooms in the Broadway section and no manager's office.

2. Stairway: Aside from fire escapes and basement stairs in the shops and the stair to the mezzanine of the restaurant, there is only one stair in the building, the hotel stair. This stair is located in the center of the building and wraps around an enclosed relatively modern elevator. There is no decorative detailing with the exception of a 3-1/2 foot wide ballustrade at the third floor and half of a newell post at the wall side of the first floor.

3. Flooring:

- a. Shops: Vinyl asbestos tile over hardwood.
- b. Restaurant: Carpet over hardwood.
- c. Hotel: There is ceramic tile and carpet in the lobby.
the second and third floors are carpeted over hardwood.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: Painted plaster throughout with the exception of the pressed metal ceiling of the restaurant and the accoustical hung ceilings of the shops and hotel lobby.

5. Doors: Hardwood panel doors.

6. Hardware: The hotel doors have brass knobs with decorative plates.

7. Mechanical equipment:

- a. Heating: A boiler in its own section of basement distributes heat to a steam radiator system throughout the building.
- b. Lighting: The building has always been lighted with electricity. The shops and hotel lobby have fluorescent fixtures. The restaurant has various types of antique fixtures, not original to the building. Hotel hallways are lighted by two-bulb chandeliers and rooms by incandescent fixtures.

D. Site:

Orientation and general setting: The building is located between the business and civic centers of Denver at the three way intersection of Broadway, Sixteenth Street and Sixteenth Avenue. Broadway parallels the west facade and Sixteenth Avenue the north. There is an alley to the east and an adjacent store to the south. Concrete sidewalks are contiguous.

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was undertaken by the Regional Transportation District (RTD) of Denver in compliance with Executive Order 11593 and a Memorandum of Agreement with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. The project was derived as a mitigative effort in the development of the Denver Transitway/Mall in consultation with the State Historic Preservation Officer Arthur Townsend. John A. Burns, AIA was the HABS project coordinator. Plymouth Place was measured and drawn by Kathleen S. Hoeft and Chalmers G. Long, Jr. of Long-Hoeft Architects. The written data was prepared by Long-Hoeft Architects. All work was done early in 1979. The data was edited in the HABS office by Mary Beth Betts in June, 1979. The photocopy of the 1898 newspaper illustration is courtesy of RTD. Photographs of the buildings were taken in early 1979 by James O. Milmo.